

## CHAPTER 3.0

### AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

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#### 3.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes the physical, biological, social, and economic environments in the Travel Management Planning project area on the Bitterroot National Forest, and the effects of implementing the Project's alternatives on the resources in those environments. Each resource section is organized as follows: Scope of Analysis and Analysis Methods; Regulatory Framework; Affected Environment; Environmental Consequences; Consistency with Forest Plan, Laws, and Regulations; and Changes Between Draft EIS and Final EIS. Referenced documents are provided in the Project File, which is an integral part of this FEIS.

Discussions under each resource include a description of the applicable regulatory framework. Federal environmental laws, including the National Environmental Policy Act, the Endangered Species Act, and the Clean Water Act, provide direction to the Forest Service for the management of forest resources. These laws are interpreted and defined through the Code of Federal Regulations, the Bitterroot National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan), Forest Service Manual direction, and Forest Service policy. State environmental laws, including best management practices, are interpreted and defined through the Administrative Rules of Montana. The regulatory framework associated with each resource is helpful in relating national, state, and Forest direction to resource analysis procedures.

Each resource is described by its current (existing) condition in the section titled Affected Environment. These descriptions include the spatial (geographic) boundaries for direct, indirect, and cumulative effects analyses. The boundaries are used in determining the extent and magnitude of effects. Existing base line, or benchmark, conditions and possible thresholds are also indicated.

The information provided in the Affected Environment section includes the effects of past actions, which are part of the existing condition.

##### 3.0.1 ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES ANALYSIS

The Environmental Consequences sections for the resources described in this chapter discuss the environmental and economic\social effects that could occur with the implementation of each alternative. They form the scientific and analytical basis for the comparison of alternatives presented in Table 2-24 at the end of Chapter 2 (40 CFR §1502.16). The effects of the no-action alternative (**Alternative 2**) form a baseline against which the action alternatives are evaluated. Each resource description begins with a brief explanation of how effects were analyzed and the models used, if applicable. The analyses were conducted in accordance with the requirements of 40 CFR §1502.24.

Environmental effects can be **direct, indirect, or cumulative**. They can be long or short-term in duration. Effects can be quantitative or qualitative, adverse or beneficial, actual or potential. It is important to consider the timing and location of effects. **Direct effects** are those that are caused by the action, and occur at the same time and place. **Indirect effects** are those that are caused by the action, but occur later in time or are further removed in distance, yet are still reasonably foreseeable (40 CFR §1508.8). In most cases, direct and indirect effects are discussed together. **Cumulative effects** are those that result from the incremental impact of the action when added to other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable actions (40 CFR §1508.7). The discussion first considers the direct and indirect effects of each alternative followed by the cumulative effects.

The cumulative effects analysis builds on the existing condition assessment described in the Affected Environment section by considering the incremental addition of the direct and indirect effects associated with each alternative, as well as the effects of ongoing/present and reasonably foreseeable actions. While impacts can be differentiated by direct, indirect, and cumulative, the concept of cumulative impacts takes into account the compounding effects of disturbances resulting from all actions.

Appendix A to the FEIS describes other activities (past, present and reasonably foreseeable) that have the potential to contribute to cumulative effects for the resources in the Travel Management Planning project area.